

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

Commodore Perry's First Expedition to Japan *Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. 12, Issue 70, 1856*

Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan in 1853. He returned the following year and signed the Convention of Kanagawa, which gave the United States limited trade access and the right to maintain a permanent consul. Perry thought he had concluded an agreement with the Emperor, when in fact he had dealt only with the ruling Shogun. Townsend Harris, the first U.S. diplomat to serve in Japan is credited with officially opening Japan to the West in 1858. This account of Perry's first expedition was published in one of America's most popular magazines in 1856 after his return to the United States.

The successful issue of the expedition of Commodore Perry to Japan was hailed with proud acclamation by the American people. The strict isolation of the Japanese, amidst the busy intermingling of all the nations of the world in an age of extraordinary commercial activity, marked them out as a peculiar race. There was in this exceptional position of Japan something irresistibly provocative of American enterprise, the indomitable energies of which had hitherto mastered every opposition, whether of man or of nature. The change in the geographical position of the United States in relation to the East, by the acquisition of the golden territory of California, establishing our domain, as it were, the middle kingdom between Europe and Asia, while it brought the Americans closer to Japan, served also to reveal more clearly the remoteness of that strange country from all national communion.

Prompted by a natural curiosity to know a nation which boastingly defied the intelligence of the civilized world, and seemed to think, like a child that by shutting its own eyes, it put out the light of the universe, and wrapped itself forever in darkness; stimulated with a desire to establish commercial relations with a people known to be industrious and wealthy; and eager to expand a profitable intercourse with Asia, toward which the newly-acquired shores of California directly pointed, and the perfected development of steam communication brought the United States so near, it was not surprising that American enterprise should be impatient to disperse the obscurity which shut out Japan from the view of the world, and darkened the direct passage to the East. Some thoughtful minds pondered the subject, and as they looked to the intercourse with Japan as inevitable, carefully considered the means by which commercial relations could be established with that country, without a sacrifice of national dignity on the one hand, or a cruel exercise of power on the other.

Commodore Perry had been among the first to urge upon the government the necessity and advantage of sending an embassy to Japan, for the purpose of establishing commercial relations between

that country and the United States. Others, it is true, had speculated upon the subject, and it is known that the great statesman, Daniel Webster, had—though at first with the characteristic slowness of deliberation of his massive intellect, he received the suggestion with an apparent lack of interest—finally, with a clear vision of the important results to his country, exercised his great powers toward the consummation of a treaty with Japan. The immediate efforts, however, which led to the expedition, came from the active energies of Commodore Perry, and to him was reserved the honor of conducting and bringing to a successful result the mission to Japan. The public, with the pride it feels in a national triumph, has naturally awaited with eager curiosity the full revelation of the details of the Japanese expedition. It is known that the interest of the nation is to be fully gratified by a complete narrative, on the part of Commodore Perry, of his mission; and the work will, undoubtedly, be a worthy record of his great services. In the mean while, we proceed to give our readers a rapid narrative of the Commodore's movements, from the inception to the close of his mission, drawn from the most authentic sources.

When it became known that the United States government had resolved upon an expedition to Japan, an eager desire was evinced on the part of many scientific persons, and others governed by a liberal curiosity, to join Commodore Perry on a journey which promised to add so much to the interest and information of the world. There were others, however, actuated by less worthy motives, who used every influence, direct and indirect, to participate in the advantages of the occasion. Among the latter was the well-known author of the famous work on Japan, the German Von Siebold, who, having been banished from Japanese territory, where he had forfeited his life by a violation of law, was desirous of defying the Japanese authorities under the protection of the American flag. There was every reason, too, to suspect that Russia, ever on the alert to advance her interests, and never very scrupulous about the means, had employed the subtle German to act as a spy, and to counteract, in behalf of the government of which he was a servile tool, the proceedings of the United States in the contemplated mission to Japan. Commodore Perry had, however, reserved the duties of the expedition exclusively for the naval officers, as they alone could be thoroughly controlled by the naval discipline which was so essential toward preserving a perfect unity of action. The offers of all external aid were therefore refused, and though in some instances with regret, yet not without the highest satisfaction in the case of Von Siebold, whose affectation of disinterestedness was exposed by the exactest information of his real character.

Arrival in Shanghai

After the usual delays and obstructions which seem inseparable from public business, Commodore Perry finally sailed in the steamer Mississippi from Norfolk, on the 24th of November 1852, on the mission to Japan. . . . We need not dwell upon the visit of the Commodore to Madeira, St. Helena, the Cape of Good Hope, the Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, and Canton, at all of which places he successively touched for supplies of fuel and refreshments, but will pass at once to those comparatively unknown countries in which the experiences of the expedition will supply new sources of interest and information. . . . The Commodore's arrival at Shanghai was hailed with a joyful welcome by the American merchants, whose patriotic fervor and interest in the public weal happened just at that time to coincide with a due regard for their own private concerns. The Chinese rebels had been making formidable headway, and were threatening to march upon Shanghai, much to the discomposure of the wealthy foreign traders, who, with their millions at stake, were very joyful at the opportune arrival of an American Commodore, and were very well pleased to have their money bags guarded by a formidable battery of American guns. It was not surprising, then, that these gentry were disposed to make the most of their visitors, which, it may be stated to the credit of their hospitality, they did in the handsomest possible style.

Although Shanghai has only been opened to foreign commerce since the English opium war, it has already become an immense mart for American and European trade, surpassing in extent that of Canton, and destined, probably, to monopolize the whole in the course of time. The foreign merchants have erected immense storehouses and palatial residences, which they term *Hongs*, along the quay which borders the dirty, shallow stream of the Yangtse-keang. The foreign merchants who reside in China do their best to compensate themselves for their absence from home by building magnificent residences, where they succeed admirably in combining civilized comfort with Oriental splendor. To do them justice, they are the most hospitable of men, and the visitor finds his letter of introduction something more than a ticket for soup, for it immediately gives him the run of palatial quarters, where he is at home at once, and has all the advantages of a first-rate hotel without the disagreeable reminder that there is a bill to pay. All the guest has to do is to express a wish and it is gratified by the Chinese majordomo on the instant, and no want is too preposterous for the universal power this omnipotent provider seems to have over the wide domain of flesh, fish, and fowl. Nor is his control confined to the solid substantials of life, for he seems equally absolute in his dominion over the liquid luxuries, as was fairly tested when the order for some Saratoga water was responded to immediately by a bottle just fresh, as it were, from the Congress Spring. Commodore Perry had, however, no time to dally in the luxuriance of the palatial residences of the foreign merchants of Shanghai; so eating

his last dinner, and making his farewell bow at the gay but rather hot balls, he prepared to embark on his mission. . . .

During the voyage general orders were read to the officers and crew to the effect that, as all amicable means were to be used before resorting to force, to obtain the object of the expedition, each one, in his relations with the Japanese, should be as friendly as possible. It was, however—although it was hoped a conciliatory policy would affect all that was desired—evidently the resolute purpose of the Commodore to open Japan to American intercourse at all hazards. To be prepared for every emergency the crews of the ships were kept thoroughly drilled, and being beaten daily by the sound of the trumpet and the roll of the drum to quarters, reached such a state of discipline as would have made them very dangerous to quarrel with. With smooth seas and light winds the steamers soon traversed the short space of six hundred miles, and made the land after three days sail.

Greetings from "Patriarchal Worthies"

Nothing could be more grateful to the eye after the sea voyage, although it had only been of three days duration, than the first view of the islands of Loo-Choo [part of modern Formosa] which rose in picturesque elevations from the sea, covered with the freshest verdure. . . . The whole fleet presented quite a formidable appearance, and naturally awakened a great interest on shore, and as the steamers closed in with the land the stir among the natives, who could be seen busily moving about with their white umbrellas—for a pattering rain kept briskly falling—was quite apparent. The ships had hardly come to anchor when a boat came alongside bringing a couple of native dignitaries from the shore. Those gentlemen of Napa made quite an imposing appearance, and would have gladdened the heart of an artist in search of a couple of model patriarchs of the time of Joseph and his brethren. Their costume, complexion, and reverend air were quite in character with the patriarchal worthies, the thought of whom their presence suggested. They wore long flowing robes of yellow and blue grass-cloth, which were gathered in at the waist with sashes and fell below in folds nearly to their white-sandaled feet. On their heads were bright yellow caps, of a round, oblong form, resembling somewhat the Turkish fez in shape, termed, in the Loo-Choo dialect, *Hetchee-Matchee*, which were tied under their chins with strings, while from their swarthy Oriental faces, down upon their breasts, flowed long beards. The Loo-Choo dignitaries came on board, bowing so profoundly that they nearly touched the deck at each salaam with the yellow caps, and then, after assuming a temporary perpendicular, presented to one of the officers their cards. . . .

He [the Chinese Steward serving as interpreter] understood the writing sufficiently to discover that the visit was only one of politeness. They asked very courteously after the Commodore, and expressed a wish to have the pleasure of seeing him; but the Commodore, knowing the ceremonious kind of people he had to deal with, and how necessary it was to conform to their Oriental notions of dignity, refused to receive them, as he had determined to show himself only to the highest in authority, and he had reason to

suppose his present visitors, although undoubtedly of the ton [the aristocracy], were not of the loftiest official position. . . .

The day (Saturday, 28th May, 1853) appointed for the visit of the Regent had arrived, and everything looked propitious for the occasion. The weather, for two days previous rainy and unsettled, had cleared up, and though the heat was great, the glare of the hot sun was occasionally veiled by shifting clouds, the shadows of which chased each other rapidly over the beautiful landscape, varying perpetually the tints of green which freshly colored the fields of rice, and the rich tropical vegetation which covered the hills and filled the valleys of the island. Everything was in readiness on board the Commodore's flag-ship for the reception of the august visitor expected. . . . The Regent was the most remarkable-looking man in the company. He, according to his own account, was only fifty-five years of age, but his long white beard, and general venerableness of aspect, made him look like a patriarch of twice that age in a remarkable state of good preservation. . . .

The Commodore's Demands

The Commodore now for the first time revealed himself to the Loo-Choans, having hitherto preserved the most profound seclusion. . . . After the usual preliminary courtesies, the Commodore stated to the Regent, through the interpreter, the object of his visit to Loo-Choo. He had come, said the Commodore, to remain in the harbor of Napa until the arrival of the rest of his squadron before proceeding to Japan. . . . All the demands of the Commodore were unresistingly acceded to, but with an air of nervous anxiety, showing that the Regent was actuated more by his fears than his desires. As he rose to depart the Commodore promised to return his visit at the Palace of Sheudi, a notification which seemed greatly to startle the old man. . . .

The expressed resolution of the Commodore to return the visit of the Regent within the palace of Sheudi, had apparently created a great deal of anxiety on the part of the authorities, and they seemed resolved to prevent it if possible. They sent word that it was contrary to all precedent, and expressly forbidden by their laws, for a stranger to intrude within the sanctuary of the palace. Receiving no satisfactory answer to this protest, the Loo-Choans bethought themselves of trying a ruse upon the Commodore, and made the attempt to entrap him into an informal visit upon the Regent by preparing a feast at Napa, where that dignitary would be present, and to which the Commodore was invited. Just at that time, however, the Commodore found it convenient to attend to the dispatch of the steamship the *Caprice*, for Shanghai, and sent word that business unfortunately prevented his acceptance of the polite invitation, etc.

They were, however, not to be balked of their cunning civility, and as the Commodore would not go to the feast, they sent the feast to him. . . . The Commodore, however, kept himself secluded within his cabin, and left the banquet to be discussed by his officers

and men, who found Loo-Choo fare quite appetizing, and soon cleared the decks. The Commodore now informed the authorities that his promised visit to the palace would certainly come off on Monday, the 6th of June, after the return of the exploring party. . . .

The visit to Sheudi was the hardest morsel for the Loo-Choan authorities to swallow, and they hemmed and coughed, and tried to put it off by all manner of imaginable deceit and trickery. The Regent dispatched a diplomatic missive beautifully inscribed upon a long roll of the softest of their bark-woven paper, in lines of Chinese characters, painted in India ink with a camels-hair pencil. The roll was enclosed in an envelope, and duly sealed with the regal arms. The purport of this communication was to persuade the Commodore not to proceed to the palace of Sheudi, on the plea of the illness of the Queen Dowager, who had received such a shock from the visit of an English Admiral who had obstinately intruded himself within the sacred precincts of the palace some two years ago, that she had not yet recovered, and, wrote the Regent, another such a visit might be the death of her Majesty the royal mother.

The Commodore in answer expressed his deep sorrow for the affliction of the Queen Dowager, and very humanely offered to send her one of his skillful surgeons, who would undoubtedly set the royal lady all right again; but as he took quite a different view of the case of her Majesty, he did not believe that his presence could act otherwise than favorably, as her mind would be diverted by the novel sight of the American visitors. The Commodore, therefore, reiterated his determination to go to the palace of Sheudi, as he believed this reputed sickness of the Kings mother was all a sham. In fact, the youthful King and the Queen Dowager were suspected, at times, to be no more of realities than was Mrs. Harris, and to this day, it is by no means certain whether Loo-Choo has any other than an imaginary royal family reigning over it. . . .

First Encounter

On Monday morning, June 6th, at an early hour, a dozen or more boats, launches, cutters, gigs, and other small craft, pushed off for the shore, loaded with officers in full uniform, the marines with their bayoneted muskets and in their gay dress of blue and white, and the sailors with their black tarpaulins and their neat navy shirts. They were soon followed by the Commodore, in full feather, seated in his state barge, who, upon landing, was received by the marines, who, forming into two lines presented arms as he passed between them. The procession was now formed at the village of Tumai, on the outskirts of Napa, at about two miles from Sheudi, with hundreds of the natives, gathered from the neighborhood, looking on in the distance at the novel show.

First came a park of artillery, consisting of two field-pieces, over each of which waved the American flag, borne by a stunt sailor, then the interpreters, succeed by the ship's band striking up a succession of lively airs, and a company of marines, followed by the Commodore in his sedan chair. This sedan chair was an extemporaneous affair got up for the occasion by the ship's carpenter, and although it was somewhat rudely constructed, and

not very elaborately adorned, was altogether, for its size, a more comfortable conveyance than the native *kagoo*, the only kind of Loo-Choan carriage extant. The *kagoo* is a mere box, about two feet in height, which puzzles one vastly to get into, and to keep in when he is there. The rider is forced to double himself into all the folds his arms, legs, and the extent of suppleness of his back will admit. He is obliged to sit cross-legged, arms folded, back doubled, and neck bent; and then, as he is carried by a couple of quick-moving natives jogging along, he is reminded by the repeated knockings of his head against the hard wooden roof that all his packing has been in vain, and that the contents of the *kagoo* are quite too large for its capacity.

The Commodore, therefore, with a due regard for his comfort, had provided himself with a sizable sedan chair, which was borne on the shoulders of four Chinese Coolies from the ship, with a relay of four others to divide the labor. On either side of the sedan walked two marines as bodyguards, and the Chinese servant of the Commodore; while, immediately behind, several Coolies came carrying the presents wrapped in red flannel. The officers of the ships then succeeded, followed by another company of marines which brought up the rear. The number, all told, amounted to more than two hundred; and as they moved along with flags flying in the breeze, the sword hilts and bayonets, and the golden adornments and bright uniforms of the officers and soldiers flashing in the sun's light, and the bands playing a stirring tune, they presented quite a cheerful spectacle, which the Loo-Choans seemed to enjoy wondrously, as they collected everywhere by the roadside, and looked on with evident marks of delight making holiday of the occasion.

The road lay along a paved causeway which led from Napa to the summit of the hill upon which the town and palace of Sheudi rose high to the view. Along this road was a succession, on either side, of fertile rice-fields and beautiful gardens, and as the procession advanced, reaching the higher ground, a fine view was obtained of the whole circuit of the island. On approaching the capital its houses were seen grouped upon the acclivity of a hill and almost hid in thick foliage, while upon the summit rose high above the other buildings the fortress-like royal palace. The procession now passed, at the entrance to the city, through a gate of wood, high-arched above, and inscribed with certain characters which signified The Central Hill, or The Place of Authority. Sheudi, the capital and residence of the putative young monarch, was once the central one of three fortresses, each of which was the residence of a king, according to the ancient tradition, which records that the island of Great Loo-Choo was formerly divided into three dynasties. . . .

There were three passages through the gates central and two side ones, the former being exclusively for the higher classes. It was through this, of course, that the procession made its way out into the wide and almost deserted main street of Sheudi, which, bounded on either side by high coral walls enclosing the residences of the inhabitants, and intersected by narrow lanes, led to the palace. A throng of officials in their gay, flowing robes, with wide

sleeves, red and yellow *hatchee-matchees*, with fans, umbrellas, and chow-chow boxes, being in full toilet for the occasion, met the procession with many profound salutations, and finding that the Commodore was not to be diverted from his resolution, conducted it to the palace.

This was an irregular structure of wood surrounded by a succession of walls, through which opened arched entrances, at one of which were two lofty pillars of stone and a couple of full-sized rudely carved lions. The Commodore, accompanied by his suite, was ushered into a hall of no great size, and of no great pretensions as to ornament or furniture; it had, however, a high-sounding title, if the interpreter correctly translated the characters in gold which were inscribed at the head of the room, and which were said to mean, "The elevated enclosure of fragrant festivities." The hall was partly screened off by paper partitions, from behind which it was suspected that the Queen-mother, if there were such, was gratifying her royal curiosity. The American officers were conducted to seats, which were very like camp-stools, and placed on the right of the room, while the Regent and the other Loo-Choan dignitaries took their position on the left. After a ceremonious interchange of compliments, the Americans were invited to partake of some refreshments which were evidently very hastily got up, and consisted of cups of diluted tea, dabs of tough gingerbread, and tobacco. The Regent had evidently calculated upon his powers of persuasion to divert the Commodore from his fixed purpose of visiting the royal palace, and, accordingly, no preparation had been made for his reception.

Diplomatic Maneuvering and a Lavish Feast

The Commodore now invited the Regent to visit him on board ship, after his return from an expedition he proposed to the Bonin Islands, which would be, probably, in the course of ten days. This invitation was accepted with many profound salutations, and the presents being proffered, which were politely received but hardly looked at, The Americans, at the solicitation of the Regent, adjourned to that dignitary's house, which was not far off being situated in a neighboring lane which intersected the main street. There was nothing very regal about the Regent's quarters, it being a wooden house of the ordinary style of those of the city, with a court-yard and bamboo verandas, but rather larger in size. The interior was plain but neat, with wooden rafters painted of a red color, and its floors spread with matting. Everything here was in readiness for a feast, and no sooner had the Commodore entered with his officers than they were invited to take their seats at the well-spread boards. There were ten tables in all; four in the central part of the hall, and three in each of its wings. At the two upper ones, on the right, the Commodore and his chief officers were seated, and at the same number, on the left, the Regent presided, assisted by some of the chief dignitaries of the island. The tables were heaped with the choicest Loo-Choan fare, consisting of a heterogeneous collection of strange dishes that no one but an expert of the Loo-Choan cuisine could possibly describe.

Numerous dignified-looking attendants, robed in long garments, were in waiting, and commenced the feast by handing round cups of tea, followed by earthen goblets, no bigger than thimbles, over-flowing with Sake, the native liquor distilled from rice. These Lilliputian bumpers would not have floored a flea. Then the guests, arming themselves with the pairs of chopsticks at their sides, commenced the general attack upon the spread before them. Surrounded as they were by an immense variety, and without any knowledge of Loo-Choan cookery to direct them, they made an indiscriminate charge upon the bits of hogs liver and of sugar-candy, the red slices of eggs and of cucumber, the boiled fish and mustard, the fried beef, and the tender morsels of various somethings, which, as there was no bill of fare, it was impossible to tell what, although it was suspected they might be dog, cat, rat, or some other choice viand.

In addition to the dishes on the table the waiters were constantly bringing in a succession of courses in rude earthen howls, until they amounted to twelve, eight of which were different kinds of soup, and the rest were gingerbread, doughnuts, cabbage-sprouts, and an herb something like our calamus [also known as sweet flag]. The Commodore, somewhere about the middle of the feast, calling upon the company to fill their cups with sake, proposed the health of the Queen-dowager, her royal son, and the toast, "Prosperity to the Loo-Choans, and may they and the Americans always be friends". . . [The Regent] who received them with very evident marks of satisfaction, and taking up his thimbleful of sake, drank it to its last dregs, and slapped down the tiny cup bottom upward upon the table, to show that he was a fair drinker and a man above heel-taps. Several toasts and healths succeeded, and the dinner having reached the end of the twelfth course, the Commodore and his party took their departure and, forming in procession as before, returned to Tumai and embarked on board ship.

The Commodore, having made fair progress in his diplomacy with the slippery authorities of Loo-Choo, and leaving the well-armed steamer *Mississippi* to keep up a wholesome awe, on their part, of the American style of negotiation, departed from Napa on the ninth of June, in his flag-ship, the *Susquehanna*, with the sloop-of-war *Saratoga* in tow. In five days, with the genial and favoring gales of the southwestern monsoon, the two vessels arrived and anchored in Port Lloyd, the principal harbor of the Bonin Islands. . . . After a visit of four days duration, during which the islands were thoroughly explored, and their future interests promoted by an addition of some animals to their stock, the Commodore returned with his two ships to Loo-Choo, where he arrived on the evening of June the twenty-third.

The Commodore found everything at Napa very much as when he had left, although . . . there was some surprise in finding that the venerable Regent had been deposed and a younger man substituted in his place. It was thought at first that that aged and

respectable dignity had made way with himself, in accordance with the Loo-Choan and Japanese practice. Whenever an official incurs the serious displeasure of his superiors, he anticipates the consequences by what is termed in Japan the *Hari-Kari*, which is a very summary operation of suicide. The self-condemned criminal first rips up his bowels with his sword, and then cuts his neck, by which he forestalls all judiciary proceedings; and although he loses his life, which he would have done probably in any event, he secures his property to his family, which otherwise would have been forfeited to the state. It was, however, a very agreeable surprise to find that the venerable Regent had not been reduced to this unpleasant necessity, and it was quite a relief to the anxiety of all to see the old gentleman again, though shorn of his honors, in the full possession of his head and of his digestive apparatus, apparently in its original state of integrity. He had, it was learned, merely resigned in consequence of his modest conviction that he was too old to cope with the resolute energies of the enterprising Yankees, and a more youthful and active man had taken his place. The new Regent had succeeded, among his other honors, to the invitation which the Commodore extended to his predecessor, and he and his suite were accordingly dined on board the *Mississippi*, where they showed a hearty appreciation of roast beef, plum pudding, and of what they were pleased to term American sake—some old Monongahela whisky.

Americans in the Bay of Yedo

The Commodore now mustered all his forces for the expedition to Japan, with the determination to push with the greatest promptitude the designs he had in view. . . . On rather a foggy morning the 8th of July, six days after leaving Napa, the precipitous coast of Idzu, a district of Nippon, loomed up through the hazy atmosphere, and revealed the first sight of Japan to the sharp-sighted sailor at the mast-head of the *Susquehanna*. . . . The Commodore had determined to push his way as near as possible to Yedo, the capital, situated at the head of the bay of the same name, so he boldly steamed where steamer had never ventured before, and was soon plowing the remote waters of Japan, and looking with eager interest upon the novel scene which surrounded him. . . .

The bay was busy with trading-junks, sailing up and down with their broad sails, or putting in here and there at the various ports. A fleet of Japanese boats, supposed to be government vessels, pulled out into the stream, with the apparent purpose of arresting the progress of the squadron. The steamers, however, passed them contemptuously by, and as they moved along rapidly on their course, at the rate of eight or nine knots an hour, with all their sails furled, the Japanese were left rapidly behind, and in a state evidently of much amazement at the sight of the first vessels they had ever beheld impelled by steam. As the day advanced the sun came out, dispelling the mist which had gathered over the land, and revealing a wide prospect of the distant country. Mont Fuji was now seen rising to an immense height, with its cone-like summit covered with snow, which glistened brightly in the sun.

The ships, as they approached their anchorage, continued sounding at every turn of the steamers wheels, and they moved on, slowly and cautiously, until they reached a part of the bay off the city of Uraga, on the western side. The anchors were now let go, and the squadron was securely moored in Japanese waters, within a nearer distance of the capital of Yedo than any foreign vessel had ever ventured. As the ships hove to, commanding with their guns the town of Uraga and the battery upon its promontory, two guns were fired from the neighboring forts, and rockets were discharged into the air, for the purpose probably of signaling the authorities at the capital. An immense fleet of government boats, each distinguished by a white flag at the stern with a black central stripe and a tassel at the bow, came, in accordance with the usual practice in Japanese waters, hovering about the squadron.

A Tense Encounter

The Commodore had issued orders that no one from the shore should be allowed to board either of his vessels except his own flagship. Some of the boats, however, attempted to get alongside the *Saratoga*, and the crews clung to the chains until they were repelled with considerable violence. One of the Japanese boats was allowed to come alongside of the *Susquehanna*. . . Two persons, each with a couple of swords, a Japanese mark of official rank, stood toward the stern, and were evidently men of authority [The Vice Governor of Uraga and his interpreter]. As the boat reached the side of the steamer one of these dignitaries held up a scroll, which turned out to be a document in the French and Dutch languages, ordering off the ships, and forbidding them to anchor their peril. No notice was taken of this very peremptory summons, and the officer on the deck of the Commodore's ship refused positively to touch the paper. The chief functionary on the boat made signs to have the gangway let down, that he might come on board the *Susquehanna*. This was reported to the Commodore, who kept secluded in his cabin, and he sent word that no one but a dignitary of the highest rank would be received. The Chinese interpreter attached to the squadron tried to make this understood to the Japanese, but as there seemed some difficulty, one of the two functionaries in the boat, who was the chief spokesman, cried out in very good English, "I can speak Dutch!" The Dutch interpreter was then summoned in the emergency, and a parley ensued. . . As they insisted that they were the proper persons with whom to confer, they were admitted on board, and were received in the captain's cabin on deck. The Commodore had resolved, from motives of policy, to keep himself entirely secluded until a personage of the highest rank was appointed to meet him, and accordingly communicated with the visitors only through his subordinate officers.

The Japanese were now told that the Commodore bore a letter to the Emperor from the President of the United States, which he was prepared to deliver as soon as a proper person was appointed to receive it. To this they replied that Nagasaki, in the island of Kiusion, was the only place where any such communication could be received, and that the ships must proceed there immediately. This being reported to the Commodore, he sent back an answer

declaring that he would not go to Nagasaki; and, moreover, if the authorities did not remove their boats, which were thronging about the ships, he would disperse them by force.

This last piece of intelligence produced a very prompt effect, for the Vice-Governor of Uraga rose hurriedly on learning it, and going to the gangway beckoned the guard-boats away. In reference to the reception of the President's letter, the Japanese dignitary said he had nothing more to say, but that another personage of higher rank would come next morning and confer with the Commodore about it. The Japanese now took their departure.

The presence of the Americans in the bay of Yedo was evidently exciting a very lively apprehension among those on shore, for guns were frequently firing, signal rockets shooting up into the air, soldiers parading about the batteries on the various headlands, and at night beacon fires were blazing and illumining the long extent of shore. In accordance with the Vice-Governor's promise, his superior, the Governor of Uraga, visited the *Susquehanna* next day, notwithstanding the former gentleman had said, at first, that he himself was the proper person, and that it was against the laws of Japan for the latter to board a foreign ship. But this kind of deception is a recognized element of Japanese diplomacy, and lying is an established function of Japanese official duty, so it was considered as a matter of course, and the Commodore regulated his conduct accordingly.

The Governor, who sent in his name upon his gigantic red card as Kayamon Yezaimon, was a more imposing persona than his Vice, and was robed in character with his great pretensions. . . Yezaimon was admitted to an interview, not, however, with the Commodore, who still preserved his dignified reserve, but with one of his captains. A long conversation ensued, in the course of which he was told very much the same things as had been said to his predecessor. He, finding that the Commodore was resolute in his declaration that he would not go to Nagasaki, promised to refer the subject to the imperial government. . .

The Commodore had sent out a number of boats, well armed, to survey the bay, and as they proceeded in their work, closing in with the land, troops of Japanese soldiers thronged the shores and the batteries, while fleets of government boats, with armed men under the command of military officers, pushed out into the stream, with the apparent purpose of intercepting the surveyors. The American lieutenant who led the survey party ordered his men to rest upon their oars a while, and to adjust the caps to their pistols, that they might be prepared for what appeared to be the imminent prospect of a collision. The Japanese, however, observing the resolute attitude of the strangers, sculled their trim boats fast away, and the Americans were left undisturbed in their labors.

The Possibility of Violence

Yezaimon having observed the survey boats busy in the bay, expressed great anxiety, and declared that it was against the Japanese laws, to which he was answered that the American laws command it, and that the Americans were as much bound to obey

the latter as his countrymen were the former. The Commodore had everything in battle array in case of a rupture. . . Not that the Commodore anticipated actual hostilities, but that he was resolved to be on the alert in case of an emergency, knowing that the best means of avoiding war was to be well prepared for it. The Japanese on their part were no less engaged in busy preparation, furbishing up their forts and extending long stretches of black canvas to either side, with the view of giving them a more formidable aspect, not conscious apparently that the telescopes from the ships decks disclosed all their sham contrivances for effect. The Japanese soldiers showed themselves in great force about the batteries, glittering in their gay robes of bright blue and red, while their lacquered caps, and tail spears, shone brightly in the sun's light. Numbers of government boats also thronged the neighboring shores.

After the most provoking and tedious negotiation with the Governor of Uraga, who almost daily visited the *Susquehanna*, and pertinaciously offered every obstacle in his power to the Commodore's resolute determination to be received by a proper personage to whom he might deliver the President's letter, it was at last reluctantly decided by the Government of Japan that the Commodore's wish should be complied with. Accordingly, Thursday, the 14th of July, 1853, was the day appointed for an interview. It was only by the Commodore's urgent demand, and the threat that he would carry the President's letter to Yedo and deliver it in person, that the authorities were prevailed upon to intermit their tedious and prevaricating diplomacy, and, after a delay of four days, to fix the time for the reception on shore. "I will wait until Tuesday, the 12th of July, and no longer," were the emphatic words of the Commodore, and on that day the answer of the Emperor came, appointing, as we have seen, the subsequent Thursday for the reception.

A small village, called Gori-hama, about a Japanese mile south of Uraga, had been selected for the interview, and accordingly, when the day arrived, the two steamers were moved down the bay opposite the place, and anchored in a position by which their guns could command the landing. The Japanese had erected a temporary building of pine-wood, the three-peaked roofs of which rose high above the houses of the neighboring village. White canvas, painted in squares with black stripes, covered the building and stretched a long distance to either side. Nine tall standards of a rich crimson cloth, surrounded by a crowd of variegated colored flags, were distributed along the beach in front, while troops of Japanese soldiers, to the number of five thousand or more, were arrayed in line behind. The hills and country in the neighborhood were thronged with people. . . .

Everything being now in readiness for the landing, some fifteen boats left the ships loaded down with officers, marines, and sailors. One of the captains, who had the command of the day, led the van in his barge, flanked on either side by the two Japanese boats containing the Governor and Vice-Governor of Uraga and their suites. The others followed in order, accompanied by the two bands

of music, which struck up a series of enlivening tunes. A temporary wharf of straw and sand had been built out from the shore, where the boats now disembarked in succession their various loads, and fell back in line to either side. The marines and sailors were ranged in rank and file along the beach, and awaited the coming of the Commodore, who was the last to set out. He now came in his state barge, amidst the salvo of thirteen guns from his flag-ship, and immediately after landing upon the wharf was escorted up the beach to the house of reception by his bodyguard, the various officers, the marines, and sailors who formed the procession.

Pomp and Pageantry

The Americans, it must be allowed, made quite a formidable appearance with their force, which amounted, all told, to nearly four hundred . . . The United States flag was borne by two tall, broad-shouldered sailors, who had been picked out of the whole squadron for their stalwart proportions. These were immediately followed by two boys, dressed rather fancifully for the occasion, who bore, wrapped in a scarlet cloth envelope, the box which contained the Commodore's credentials and the President's letter. These documents were beautifully inscribed on vellum of folio size, and bound in blue silk velvet. The seals were attached by cords of silk and gold terminating in gold tassels, and encased in circular boxes, six inches in diameter and three in depth, beautifully wrought of solid gold. The box which contained the documents was of rosewood, with gold mountings.

The Commodore came immediately after, in full uniform, flanked on either side by a tall Negro armed to the teeth, the two being the best-looking fellows that could be found. The various officers of the squadron followed in succession according to their rank, and thus the procession reached the entrance of the Reception House. . . . The Commodore and his suite advanced to the raised dais, and were conducted to the seats which had been prepared for them on the left, the place of honor with the Japanese. On the right were the two princes who had been appointed by the imperial government to receive the President's letter. They were both venerable-looking men, with white beards and thoughtful expressions of face.

As the Commodore entered, they rose and bowed, but did not utter a word; and, in fact, during the whole interview they remained as silent as statues. These dignitaries were richly robed in garments of heavy silk brocade, interwoven with gold and silver ornaments, and made quite an effective appearance. Near them stood a large lacquered box, of a bright red color, supported on feet made of brass; and on either side of this box Yezaimon and the interpreter took their positions, crouched upon their knees. . . . Business then commenced by the Japanese interpreter asking if the letters were ready for delivery, and pointing at the red box as the proper receptacle for them. The Commodore accordingly called in his pages from the lower hall who carried the documents, and they, obeying the summons, marched up, followed by the two tall Negro

guards. They were then directed to place the papers upon the red box prepared to receive them, which they did, and the business of the day was done.

The Commodore, bowing formally, now arose and returned to the ship with the same ceremony as when he left. Yezaimon and Tatsnoske joined the Americans on board, and were readily persuaded to take a sail on the *Susquehanna* up the bay. . . . Everything on board ship was now shown to the Japanese, and they exhibited an intelligent curiosity about all they saw. While the engine of the steamer was in motion they examined with great interest every part of the machinery and by their questions showed a certain familiarity with the power of steam. They asked, for example, whether it was a smaller machine of the same kind as the ships engine which was used in America on those roads that are cut through the mountains, evidently alluding to our railroads. They wanted to know who first invented steamers, and what was the greatest speed they reached. Upon a globe being presented to them, they pointed out New York and Washington, and also the various principal states of Europe, proving a very accurate knowledge on their part of the geographical distribution of the Earth. The revolvers on board pleased them particularly, and they asked to have them fired off. On the arrival of the steamers off Uraga the Japanese left in their boats, which had been towed at the stern of the *Susquehanna*, and expressed great regret at taking what they supposed was their last farewell.

The steamers . . . finally came to anchor in a beautiful spot, which had already been carefully surveyed, and was now called for the first time the American Anchorage. Great consternation was created on land by this movement; but although the soldiers thronged the numerous batteries, and the government boats pulled

out into the bay, there was no attempt to interfere forcibly with the squadron. Yezaimon and Tatsnoske, however, as soon as the anchors were dropped, sculled up alongside the *Susquehanna* in great haste, and hurried aboard, asking anxiously, "Why do your ships anchor here?" They were, however, soon quieted when they discovered that all they had to say was not likely to produce much effect upon the Commodore, who merely told them that as he was to return in the spring, he wished to obtain a good anchorage for his vessels. After a few words of protest on the one side and explanation on the other, the whole matter dropped, and was very agreeably relieved by the entrance of a supply of refreshments. . . .

A Promise of Progress

The Japanese grew very affectionate, and particularly Yezaimon, who not only drank much Champagne, but was, oddly enough, the most pathetic of the party; he avowed that when his American friends should leave he would be obliged to relieve himself in a gush of tears. Tatsnoske became rather confidential than tender, and hinted, with a knowing look and with a very diplomatic whisper, that all would be well, as he could aver on the best authority, with the President's letter. When these jovial Japanese rose to leave, they shook hands with every man that happened to be within sight, and then descended reluctantly into their boat alongside, bowing at every step. No sooner were those worthies seated on their mats in their boat, than Yezaimon ordered one of the cases of wine which had been presented to him to be opened, and taking out a bottle, commenced drinking a parting health to his American friends. On the next morning (Sunday, July 17th, 1853), the Commodore set sail for Napa, having spent just seventeen days in the bay of Yedo. This was the duration of his first visit. . . . ■

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